

Testimony of  
**John Corcoran**  
**President, Stamford Education Association**  
Before the Education Committee  
**HB 6884 An Act Concerning the Recruitment, Retention, and Enhancement of the Teaching Profession**  
March 15, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator McCrory, Representative Currey, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty, and members of the Education Committee. My name is John Corcoran, and I am a middle school math teacher and the president of the Stamford Education Association.

I am speaking today in strong support of HB 6884, specifically the provision that would establish a minimum teacher salary for starting educators.

No one goes into teaching for the money, but we are reaching a point where our early career educators can't make ends meet. Even those who are most devoted to the profession aren't going to stay in the classroom when they simply can't pay their bills.

In Stamford, like many districts, we are currently experiencing a teacher shortage and are having a hard time attracting new educators to the district and holding on to them. Low pay isn't the only factor contributing to this problem; however, a minimum starting salary as proposed in HB 6884 would go a long way toward attracting more people to the teaching profession and keeping the educators we already have.

The cost of living in Fairfield County is extremely high, yet beginning teachers in Stamford make only \$49,684 starting out with a Bachelor's Degree. Those starting with a Master's Degree make only \$5,000 more. The average rent for a one bedroom apartment in Stamford is around \$2,300—more than half of a beginning teacher's gross pay.

More than half of our teachers don't live in Stamford because they can't afford to. We have educators making the hour-long commute every morning and evening from places like Danbury and New Haven, braving Fairfield County traffic because they can't afford to live closer to their jobs. Teachers start their careers here and get some experience under their belts, and then find a job closer to a place where they can afford to live.

[A 2021 study](#) found that, nationwide, 42 percent of educators took out at least \$65,000 in student debt to finance their education degrees. Faced with low wages early in their careers, teachers take a long time to pay off that debt, allowing it to grow with interest.

Our neighboring districts have higher starting salaries, and across the border in New York new teachers make at least \$10,000 more—more than is being proposed as a statewide starting salary for Connecticut teachers. Meanwhile, many professions that have similar educational requirements pay significantly more. [In Connecticut, teachers earn 17%](#) less than comparable college-educated workers. Consequently, enrollment in teacher preparation programs is declining; if we don't reverse this trend, our students will suffer.

Without significant action, we will continue to lose great teachers to neighboring districts and higher paying professions. Please pass HB 6884 and establish a minimum starting salary for teachers at four times the federal poverty level.

Thank you for your time and attention.